

Real School Reform: **Making Sure No Child's Health is Left Behind**

What can **OUR SCHOOL** do to  
create a healthy nutrition environment?

Make a **commitment to nutrition and physical activity**

Provide **quality schools meals** ~ breakfast, lunch and/or snacks

Promote **other health-enhancing food options** throughout school

Create **pleasant eating experiences for students and staff**

Provide **nutrition education activities** in all grades

**Market healthful school foods** to students, staff and parents



# SCHOOLS, KIDS and WEIGHT FACT SHEET

## Why should schools care about weight, nutrition and activity?

**There is a strong link between children's health and academic achievement. Fit, healthy children are ready to learn – and better able to take advantage of all school programs. By supporting healthy eating and regular physical activity, schools can improve student performance and achievement.**

- Healthy eating habits can help improve attendance, energy levels, classroom participation, school behavior, test scores and academic success.
- Research also shows that good nutrition can help reduce fatigue, irritability, apathy, anxiety, depression, infections and schools absences.
- Overweight children and those with chronic diseases may be at a higher risk for school problems due to higher rates of absences and lower self-esteem.
- Physical fitness also helps to boost brainpower. Studies show that children with higher levels of fitness perform better on standardized tests.

## What are the facts about US kid's weight, nutrition and activity?

- In a 2001 survey, 15 percent of US children 6 to 19 were overweight (triple the number in 1980), while another 15 percent were at risk of overweight. More than 10 percent of preschool children (ages 2 to 5) were overweight.
- Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased dramatically in children and teens, especially those who are overweight
- There has been a significant decrease in youth physical activity. Nearly half of adolescents aged 12 to 21 years are not vigorously active on a regular basis. About 14 percent of young people report no recent physical activity. Inactivity is more common among females than males.
- Children eat only half the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables. Experts estimate that only 1 in 5 kids gets "5 A Day." Over 50 percent of kids' snacks are cookies, desserts, potato chips, salty snacks, candy, and gum. Only 16 percent of snacks are fruits – and only 1 percent are veggies.
- American per capita soft-drink consumption has increased almost 500 percent over the past fifty years. On average, adolescents get 11 percent of their calories (about 15 teaspoons of sugar) from soft drinks per day. At the same time, milk consumption and calcium intake has declined dramatically.



## What can schools do to improve nutrition and fitness?

**There are many easy and effective ways for schools to help students, families and communities improve nutrition, physical fitness and overall health. Small changes can lead to big improvements in behavior, attitude and academic achievement.**

- Schools can make a public commitment to healthy eating by establishing **nutrition policies and standards** for all foods and beverages at school.
- Schools can provide **clear and consistent messages** about the importance of nutrition and physical activity to success in school and to lifelong health.
- Schools can serve **high-quality meals (breakfast, lunch and/or snacks)** and offer health-promoting choices in vending machines and a la carte sales.
- Schools can provide a **pleasant, relaxed atmosphere** in cafeterias and other areas so that children and adults have plenty of time to eat together.
- Schools can promote **tasty, healthful choices** like fresh produce, yogurt, low-fat milk, water and 100% fruit juice as snacks and classroom treats.
- Schools can **limit student access** to foods and beverages high in sugar and fat and to those of minimal nutritional value.
- Schools can increase demand for healthful food and beverages by working with school foodservice and others on **effective marketing activities**.
- Schools can link the classroom and cafeteria with **appropriate nutrition and food educational activities** at all grade levels.
- Schools can provide **quality physical education and regular physical activity** for all students with in-class and after-school activities.
- Schools can “walk the talk” by supporting **staff wellness programs** and other opportunities for faculty and parents to model healthy behaviors for students.
- Schools can support **family involvement** in nutrition and fitness through school-based events, educational opportunities and take-home materials.
- Schools can participate in **positive fundraising programs** that sell healthful foods (like fresh fruit) or non-food items (like children’s artwork).



## Case Study from Whitefish, Montana

*“You can not put a price on the benefits of good nutrition. I have supported changes in our school nutrition environment because I believe that this could be the missing link to a better learning environment and improve academic achievement. If we want our kids to do better on a regular basis, we need to offer them healthier choices.”*

**Kim Andersen, Principal**

### Central Middle School, Whitefish, Montana

660 to 700 students in northwest Montana

Percent of students eligible for free- and reduced-price school meals: 25%

#### Key Changes:

Over the past three years, Central Middle School has made substantial changes:

- All soft drinks have been removed from vending machines and replaced with bottled water and 100 percent juices.
- Candy has been removed from vending machines and a la carte sales. No candy is available for sale to students during school hours.
- The PTA purchased a \$4,000 vending machine for the school foodservice program. The machine is stocked daily with milk, yogurt, pudding, string cheese, beef jerky, baked chips and fruit. All profits go to the school foodservice program.
- Healthful a la carte offerings in the lunchroom now include homemade pretzels, bagels and salads, as well as Subway® sandwiches, baked chips and fresh fruit.
- The lunchtime recess schedule was changed for the 2002-2003 school year. All students now have recess before lunch.

#### Accomplishments:

- Net proceeds from vending and a la carte sales have stayed the same, or increased slightly.
- Lunchroom discipline problems have decreased – from 183 per year (prior to changes) to only 36 in the first eight months of the 2002-03 school year.
- After-lunch referrals to the principal’s office (for classroom and other behavior problems) have also decreased – from 96 referrals (in 2001-02) to just 22 referrals in the first eight months of the 2002-03 school year.
- Teachers report improved student behavior and attentiveness during 5<sup>th</sup> period classes (after lunch) and say, “students are now rested, relaxed and ready to learn.” One math teacher reports that she has “gained 10 minutes in instruction time” per class period.

#### Keys to Success:

- Collected evidence (garbage) and data (numbers of discipline and behavior problems reported in the lunchroom and after lunch)
- Built awareness and involved stakeholders (parents, foodservice staff and students)

#### For more information:

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# Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity: Online Resources for Healthy Kids and Healthy Schools

## Action for Healthy Kids

[www.actionforhealthykids.org/](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/)

In early October 2002, health professionals and educators from across the US gathered to “take action” for children’s nutrition and fitness. This site provides extensive tools, resources and contacts from the meeting in Washington, DC.

## American School Food Service Association (ASFSA)

[www.asfsa.org](http://www.asfsa.org)

The 55,000 members of ASFSA work in school nutrition all across the USA, and many are active in creating school-based nutrition programs for healthy kids. The website features research, programs and ways to get involved with local schools.

## The Body Positive

[www.thebodypositive.org/](http://www.thebodypositive.org/)

Through videos, workshops and consulting, the creators of Body Positive teach young people how to have a positive body image and a healthy relationship with food. Their recent video **BodyTalk 2** (2002) is targeted at tweens (ages 8 to 11).

## California School Board Association (CSBA)

[www.csba.org/PS/hf.htm](http://www.csba.org/PS/hf.htm)

The CSBA has long been active in encouraging schools to establish nutrition policies. Their 2003 guide **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies: Act Now for Academic Excellence** can be ordered for \$20.00.

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/)

The CDC site is an essential resource for nutrition and activity issues. Search for: surveillance data (including maps of obesity prevalence); pediatric growth charts; and several national campaigns, like Kids Walk-to-School and Turn Off Your TV.

## Center for Weight and Health (University of California, Berkeley)

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/cwh/](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/cwh/)

The center sponsors conferences and coalitions in California. The site features links to literature, research, surveys, funding and information on **Reversing Childhood Obesity Trends: Helping Children Achieve Healthy Weights**.

## Ellyn Satter Associates

[www.ellynsatter.com/](http://www.ellynsatter.com/)

Ellyn Satter Associates helps “children and adults be joyful and competent with eating”; provides resources in the area of eating and feeding, and publishes teaching materials and books, including **Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family**.



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### Healthy School Food Coalition

[http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfi/cfi\\_LA\\_sodaban.htm](http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfi/cfi_LA_sodaban.htm)

Los Angeles Unified School District, second largest US district, unanimously passed a motion banning soda sales in all district schools. This site offers a guide to the strategies used in LA and other school nutrition information.

### Healthy Weight Network

[www.healthyweight.net/](http://www.healthyweight.net/)

Francie Berg, MS, publishes *Children and Teens Afraid to Eat* and offers handouts, resources, and links, like *SNE Guidelines for Childhood Obesity Prevention Programs: Promoting Healthy Weight in Children* (2002).

### Michigan Department of Education

[www.michigan.gov/documents/healthyweight\\_13649\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/healthyweight_13649_7.pdf)

*The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weigh: A Consensus Paper* (2001) features guidance on excessive weight and weight gain; social pressure for excessive slenderness; and unsafe weight loss practices.

### Minnesota Team Nutrition ToolKit

<https://fns.state.mn.us/FNSProg/NSLP/NSLPResource.htm>

This site provides dozens of tools for enhancing school nutrition environments including: handouts for parents and students; strategies for improving vending machine options; and resources for adult role models.

### Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition)

[www.californiaprojectlean.org/](http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/)

California Project LEAN, from The Public Health Institute, supports several youth projects. *One is Food on the Run: Your Energy Wake Up Call*, a web site with simple nutrition and active solutions for teens @ [www.caprojectlean.org/](http://www.caprojectlean.org/).

### USDA Team Nutrition (US Department of Agriculture)

[www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Default.htm)

The Team Nutrition program is a goldmine of materials, kits and local efforts to enhance school nutrition environments. You can download free materials; read about Team Nutrition success stories; and find out what is going on in your state.

### VERB™: It's What You Do

[www.verbnow.com/](http://www.verbnow.com/)

VERB™ is CDC's physical activity website aimed at tweens (ages 8 to 12). This year, the longest day of the year (Saturday, June 21, 2003) is the longest day of play in the VERB (but, remember, playing isn't just for kids!)

